PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE STUDY OF CREATIVE IMAGINATION*

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"CREATIVE IMAGINATION" indicates a mental property which we usually connect with achievements in the arts, in the broadest sense of the word. But scientists and "thinkers" also rely upon creative imagination during certain probably crucial phases of their work; and in one way or another this same mental property may manifest itself in the personal or professional lives of us all.

Common to all manifestations of creative imagination, in the first place, is subjective experience. This tends to be infinitely differentiated in intensity and duration and to appear as an ingredient or accessory in many moods. Three characteristics of this experience seem outstanding.

First: Subjects are aware of the limitation of conscious effort.

Second: They are aware of a specific feeling. It is never a neutral one. There is always some, and frequently a very high, emotional charge involved.

Third: Even if excitement rises, the mind tends to work with high precision and problems are easily solved. If we adopt a broad meaning of the term "problem solving" we can say that some "problem solving" is always going on, even in art.

A further common element concerns not the subject's experience but the reaction of others to him. Wherever creative imagination is at work for better or worse it tends to establish some distinction between the one and the many.

This is not, I know, a satisfactory and certainly not an exhaustive description. However, a certain vagueness may not be out of order since we are dealing with a difficult topic. And in the end, the impression must and should prevail that, significant as the contribution of psychoanalysis is, it is limited in various ways. We have started on a

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voyage with our course largely uncharted.

I shall attempt tonight to characterize the contribution of psychoanalysis to the study of creative imagination with particular reference to art—art in a very broad sense—and loosely follow the guide of the history of psychoanalysis, since its contributions to the study of creative imagination constitute an important part of this history.

The present position of psychoanalysis, its status in science and society, offers a starting point. We shall characterize this status by stressing two aspects. There is one which will hardly preoccupy us tonight. Largely based on psychoanalytic insight for some twenty years a movement has been under way which later historians may well decide to describe as the "Psychiatric Revolution." There is, for one, the rise of psychiatry within medicine, the obsolescence of a rigid distinction between the "physical" and the "mental" in approaches to illness, in the emergence of psychosomatic medicine; there is, moreover, the ever broadening concept of mental health itself, modifying procedures in education and transforming our views on welfare to the point where charity as an institution has come to include considerations of the individual's psychological balance. During the last decade these and other related trends seem to have converged into one direction. It is this, that therapy is gradually being supplemented by prevention; and a program which has existed in a somewhat utopian sense since the earliest days of Freud's work is, thus, being carried further. The second aspect of the current status of psychoanalysis is externally characterized by the growing contact of psychoanalysis with other disciplines. It is not a contact in which psychoanalysis and sociology, anthropology or political science—to mention only some currently much emphasized examples—establish an interdisciplinary cooperation, but rather one in which psychoanalysis provides the focal point for a new science of man of which the outlines are here and there visible. Psychoanalytic therapy and psychoanalytic psychiatry in general provide the most essential set of data in the building of this new science.

How did this come about, how could two so far-reaching developments grow out of one root, originally out of the experience of one investigator?

I here turn to a quotation from Freud's earliest writings which describes his own reflections on the first extensive psychiatric case histories which he presented to the public after considerable delay, in the

fall of 1895: "I have not always been a psychotherapist, but like other neuropathologists I was educated to methods of focal diagnoses and electrical prognosis, so that even I myself am struck by the fact that the case histories which I am writing read like novels and as it were, dispense with the serious features of the scientific character. Yet I must console myself with the fact that the nature of the subject is apparently more responsible for this issue than my own predilection. Focal diagnosis and electrical reactions are really not important in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed discussion of the psychic processes, as one is wont to hear it from the poet, and the application of a few *psychological formulae*,† allows one to gain an insight into the course of events."

These words describe the scientist's struggle with a new and particularly challenging subject matter. It was not, as Freud thought at the time, one syndrome or one illness; it was the study of man's psychological conflict, an age-old topic and part of the tradition of Western civilization. Freud's predecessors were not scientists; they were the masters of intuitive insight, poets, writers and thinkers. Closest to Freud's formulations are those of some of the great men of the century of his own youth, the formulations and approaches of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Dostoievsky, and those of some minor, and yet very great men, like Samuel Butler; the coincidences which we observe are largely rooted in the similarity of cultural predispositions. This in turn makes us aware of the fact that the demand of the age and the creative effort of the individual must be in some harmony with each other; creative imagination can in some measure anticipate the future, but in empty space, out of tune with at least hidden trends, genius will not emerge; his work must fit into the structure of the problems which he solves, with which he struggles and which he modifies.

In Freud's work the confines of sciences were widened; an area of phenomena never before approached scientifically was investigated through the formulation and testing of hypotheses. The practical consequences of this step were to be seen in the enlarged orbit of therapeutic intervention, the slow, steady, and uninterrupted progress of the therapeutic technique of psychoanalysis during almost six decades, and the more recent development of psychotherapy in psychoanalytic psychiatry. In one point, at least, these developments were different from those in most other fields of medicine. When unhappiness and self-made

† Author's italics.

destiny proved in some instances to be amenable to therapeutic intervention, not only a cure of illness was offered, but also a cure where previously the existence of illness had not been recognized. The widening of the perimeter of science has, thus, led to a widening of the confines of medicine itself.

Let me briefly characterize some of the consequences of Freud's first steps for the development of psychoanalysis as a theory. The few "psychological formulae" to which he referred in the passage quoted above expanded rapidly into a cohesive set of propositions. At first, Freud could borrow his main conceptual tools from the area of his previous interests, neurophysiology. The general approach, the idea of seeing human conflicts in terms of an interplay of forces, the distinction of various types of discharge processes and of principles regulating the economy of psychic energy, were derived from this field. But the therapeutic experience with psychiatric cases forced upon Freud not only modifications of his early concepts, but also a radical extension of his approach. Two interconnected observations became of decisive importance: the realization that earliest experiences tend to leave lasting imprints on personality development; and the recognition of the role of instinctual drives, particularly in connection with the earliest phases of development. The realization of the importance of man's early total dependence on maternal care, unique amongst mammals, led Freud to supplement his physiological by a biological approach. But this biological approach received in Freud's context a new dimension. It is not limited to the consideration of genetic, biochemical or physiological forces within man; it includes also the continuous social influences upon the growing human organism. In this approach the dichotomy between the biological proper and the social is eliminated as spurious, a dichotomy which in the past had obscured many psychological formulations. There are still those who tend to re-emphasize its existence and thus to support the distinction of two kinds of sciences, natural and social sciences. The position of psychoanalysis as scientific theory and that of psychoanalytic psychiatry as therapy and hence as source of data, illustrate the value of an approach which has made it possible to integrate various fields of investigation around a core of central assumptions. The fact that the committee of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute responsible for the Freud lectures has selected as its topic for this year one which demonstrates the range of psychoanalytic thinking, may well be taken

as evidence that the integrative potential of psychoanalysis seems to us to be one of the most valuable parts of Freud's heritage.

The psychoanalytic contribution to the study of creative imagination should be seen with this in mind, as a contribution to an inquiry basic to any science of man. This view has determined the selection of the topics which are to be discussed as examples; they deal with phenomena of the nature of art, and art in turn is viewed as a particular, and as the most complex, type of communication in society.

I shall deal with three problems for which I have chosen the following headings.

First: The Problem of Thematic Generalization.

Second: The Emotive or Esthetic Potential.

Third: Creative Communication.

The *first* topic, the problem of *thematic generalization* is concerned with narration whatever the mode of presentation; it is story-centered and hence deals largely with content. The starting point is the relative uniformity of all narration, of myth, folklore, fairy tale, novel and even drama, or, to put it more cautiously, the very high frequency of recurrent themes.

Previous explanations accounted for this recurrence mainly by two interdependent types of inquiry: thematic similarity was explained by pointing to historical reasons, to the migration of accounts and thus to the influence of one narration upon others. Influence, however, posits a predisposing factor, a universal experience which explains the readiness to accept influence. As such experience, the reactions to cosmological and physiological cycles in nature and man have been most thoroughly investigated. Both the historical and the cyclical explanation is not superseded by the approach of psychoanalysis, which relates the uniformity of themes to the uniformity of conflict-patterns in man's life. This uniformity is rooted in what I mentioned as the biological approach in psychoanalysis. Hence the uniformity of conflict patterns does not refer mainly to the conscious experience of the adult but largely to the experiences and hence also to the thought-processes of the child. Universal human experiences, modified by specific conditions of the cultural environment, account for the extent to which the themes of narration tend to resemble each other.

The typical content of many of these themes was first discovered in the reconstruction of childhood fantasies during the psychoanalytic

investigation of adults and later elaborated in the observation of the growing child. We are familiar with the emergence of many such typical fantasies as the response of the child to the riddles of his own existence and to those of the adult world surrounding him: riddles not only in an intellectual sense, although this is part of it. For there is also the inherent conflict of many of the child's most basic strivings with each other and with his environment, there is, moreover, the task of adjusting to a social world in which one is still a child with wishes and desires no less intense and even more unbending than those of the adult.

The best-known coincidence between myth or great narration and individual fantasy concerns accounts which have the hero of miraculous descent, separated from his original parents, adopted by foster parents up to the day when he splendidly emerges. These accounts, widely spread in Western and particularly Mediterranean tradition but frequent also in other cultures, have lost nothing of their emotional relevance.

Some 30 per cent of the Americans of this generation are consciously aware of having thought of themselves at some time between the ages of five and fifteen as adopted or foster-children, and of having invented "true" parents of higher or—much more rarely—of lower status. There is hardly a psychoanalytic treatment, where some such fantasy fails to play its role; some of its parts tend to have remained conscious; other, dynamically more significant, parts tend to be repressed. The very fact that I can here quote percentiles of the occurrence of the conscious version is due to a special circumstance: Freud's assertion of the frequent occurrence even within consciousness of a similar fantasy is, to my knowledge, one of the first psychoanalytic hypotheses to have been experimentally tested (by what are called objective scientific methods) more than thirty years ago in this country and repeatedly retested since.

The relation between the individual's fantasy life and the thematic repertory of narrative art opened our eyes to two problems which interact independently. The first concerns the transition from individual fantasy to narrative account. The finding says that the fantasy of the individual, particularly the daydreams of those normal and abnormal individuals who habitually weave their reveries in continued stories, are closely related to the wish for immediate gratification, frequently derived from older, repressed, masturbatory fantasies, and have retained some of the characteristics of their origin.

Let me report to you how this problem presented itself to me in my days of apprenticeship. A twenty-year-old youth, interested in many aspects of his medical work, showed by his behavior the wish to impress his teachers as the most gifted and most effective student of a large class, in order to become the one who would, in each of the specialties in which he happened to be interested, make decisive contributions, and thus acquire in the professor a new and more powerful paternal protector. Apart from more obvious and typical dynamics, this behavior repeated the course of a "continued story" which since the age of five or six had dominated the young man's life in many variations. In this fantasy he was the son of the Crown-Prince of Austria, Rudolph, and had been placed as foster-child in a middle-class family. For years the stories which he told himself dealt with the topic of how he would gloriously come forward and rescue his country; how he would meet his grandfather, the emperor, and gain admiration from his own, real parents. This moment, when he would meet *them* was the focal point. Whenever this scene approached, a new setting had to be invented, since the fantasy would start to roll off fast and faster; then the details became unimportant, the "need" to get there dominated his thought, until the whole setting had become unusable and a new version had to be elaborated, soon to become subject to the same fate. The climax had swallowed the plot.

The story teller, professional or amateur, has liberated himself from similar urgency, can dispose and distribute where the daydreamer is subject to pressures since he cannot delay gratification. Here we have a first and basic precondition to the socialization of what previously was a private experience.

The second problem which impressed psychoanalysts early in their work concerns a finding first established by analytic observation and since corroborated in the study of child behavior. What narrative art offers to the child tends to be treated unconsciously as if it were a fantasy and appears in dreams as its substitute. But a borrowed fantasy can be less guiltily used since it comes from outside. The quest for such external stimulation, the need to "borrow" fantasies instead of elaborating one's own tends to grow under the pressure of certain typical conflicts, particularly those of the phallic phase of psychosexual development.

Amongst the accounts which stimulate the child's fantasy-life a special place is reserved for those which early in their development the

parents or significant substitutes tell or read to their children; these are the stories which tend to remain imbued with the memory of a specific shared experience and to be assimilated with particular ease.

Taking this as an example, we may generalize on the function of the narrator in society. He is the one who under given circumstances, in any specific cultural environment, fulfills a need of his audience. In primitive society it is the bard's prerogative to speak of the unspeakable, of incest, parricide and matricide, of the gods and the demons. However much has changed, some such prerogatives still remain peculiar to the professional narrator. We ascribe to him the faculty of adapting what he knows from personal experience, from his own fantasy, to the needs of a community. We do not necessarily assume that what he tells is a tale all his own or all about himself. His faculty includes the capacity to assimilate many patterns of conflict, to react to minimal experiences with emphatic understanding. In speaking of thematic generalization, I have this set of faculties in mind.

Amongst the narrator's public there are those who have remained on the level which we have discussed: they follow the quest for fantasies which they can borrow. And yet, this is quite obviously only one of the possible attitudes to narrative art.

To meet the demands of a public may mean a variety of things and neglects differences as fundamental as those between the Broadway hit or the pulp magazine and the great work of literature, differences which can, in some instances, be established by common sense, but which in other instances become subject to the verdict of the literary critic whose function I am not prone to underrate. It is to him that we as psychoanalysts hope to supply some tools. The two contributions of psychoanalysis to the study of creative imagination, to which we now turn may be said to serve this purpose.

The consideration of the *emotive* or *esthetic potential* is derived from the study of dreams. The texture of dreams, woven out of the day's unfinished thought and repressed and reawakened impulses, presents us with an imagery that is only in rare instances of "meaning" to the dreamer. Only the psychoanalytic method enables us to understand it.

The overdetermination of single elements in the dream or of whole parts, the condensation of many thoughts into one element or the representation of one thought in various disguises, these and similar

mechanisms are an intimate part of the "dream work," which produces the manifest dream content. The study of the mechanisms of the dream have suggested that similar mechanisms play a part in the working of creative imagination, in the production of the work of art. But it is a similarity particularly important for its clear differences.

The language of the dream which is in force when we are asleep, becomes a tool of the creator. The trance or reverie in which it emerges has the capability of most efficient communication. What in the dream impresses us as *overdetermination* becomes the *potential* of the art work. This principle has been applied to the study of various media. It is by no means limited to the understanding of narrative creations, and it contributes decisively to our understanding of especially the great masterpieces. The Oedipal conflict in Hamlet or in the Brothers Karamazov is not represented in one but in several versions. There is no one theme that has not its variations; in the relation of several sons to their fathers the central conflict is treated in various interconnected aspects in both these works. Without an understanding of the interaction of those thematic variations, or of the de-composition of one central figure into various characters, of one conflict into its various components, even the most elementary approach to the great thematic compositions cannot be attempted. Such variation of one theme may coexist with the condensation of various different themes into one incident and finally with the condensation of various meanings into one account. When Shakespeare scholars point to the meaning of *Hamlet* in terms of the contemporary Elizabethan scene, this does not contradict other interpretations: contemporary and mythological themes are interwoven. The public is faced with a multiplicity of meanings, integrated into one work and supporting each other.*

The similarity of artwork and dreamwork has been best explored and demonstrated in the study of poetry; particularly by William Empson, whose critical writings have been fertilized by psychoanalysis. Poetry is "filled with meaning" more than any other type of verbal communication; words are stimuli to associations which lead in various directions, and when Mr. Eliot, as critic, wishes to appraise the work of one of his contemporaries, of, let us say, Miss Moore, we find him saying that her poems have "a very good spread of associations." Mr.

* It is not implied that this approach "exhausts" the meaning of the art work, whose structure, naturally, may be, and frequently is infinitely richer.

Eliot should know, since the extraordinary richness of his own "spread of associations" seems to have given to his work his unique position in the poetry of this age.

Let me resume: The multiple meaning constitutes richness; the dichotomy between appropriate ambiguity and hidden precision, the latter more stringent as the lines flow into the stanza, becomes an important criterion in the study of poetic language. There are poets who are masters of multidimensional vagueness, without leading finally into the growing precision; there are others, whose lines differ from ordinary verbal communication only by meter, rhythm and setting, by the "music of poetry"—but do hardly use the very complexity of meaning. All this seems to have become more understandable to us through our experience with contemporary poetry: here complexity of words tends to be maximized, multiple meanings abound, and uncertainty of interpretation tends to prevail. There can be little doubt that in this the modern poet is more than accidentally akin to the dreamer; also the phenomenon is not limited to any one artistic medium. It is one of the distinguishing features of much that appears in modern painting. It reveals, I believe, in part the influence of psychoanalysis on modern thought. Not of psychoanalysis as a science, but of some of its findings acting as a social force: there is a trend in modern art to consider the work of art as a documentation of the creative process itself, a tendency which expresses itself in a shift in the traditional or previously existing relation between the artist and his public.

This then brings us to a third area of problems upon which psychoanalysis has thrown light: I propose to refer to it in speaking of "*Creative Communication.*" Psychoanalytic insight has helped to clarify some of the experiences which creators in many fields have described as long as a tradition of introspective writing has existed in Western civilization. These reports can be briefly summarized in the following terms: Creation tends to be experienced as a dichronous process; it has two phases which may interact with each other in various ways. They may vary in duration, frequency of occurrence, and intensity. In the first the creator is driven; he is in an exceptional state. Thoughts or images tend to flow, things appear in his mind of which he never seemed to have known.

I quote: "A thought suddenly flashes up like lightning: it comes with necessity. I have never had any choice in the matter. . . . There is

the feeling that one is utterly out of hand, with the very distinct consciousness of an endless number of fine thrills and titillations descending to one's very toes. There is a depth of happiness in which the most painful and gloomy parts do not act as antitheses to the rest, but are produced and required as necessary shades of color in such an overflow of light." The sudden character of the experience described in this quotation from Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* stands in contrast to the second phase of productivity, when all is labor, when the creator looks upon his work, as it were, from the outside, and concentration and endeavor predominate. No one in recent decades has more sharply contrasted these two phases than A. E. Housman, to whom we not only owe one of the most vivid descriptions of creative inspiration, but also of the "hell that is to pay" when the flow has tarried. As the manuscripts of his poems became accessible for study—some of them in the Library of Buffalo University, where documents on the process of creation are being collected—we can watch the difference which he describes, the instances when lines or a stanza flew to the mind, and the others, when ease was absent and purposeful concentration had to substitute.

Psychoanalytic observation of creative individuals leads to a somewhat better understanding of such descriptions. In the state of inspiration the psychic apparatus is in an exceptional condition. The barrier between the Id and the Ego has temporarily become permeable. Impulses reach preconsciousness more easily than under other conditions, and their translation into formed expression can proceed painlessly. Forces previously used for repression are being used by the Ego for another purpose. All energy seems to be vested into the process of coming to consciousness; hence the similarity between inspirational experiences and those of a hallucinatory kind, a similarity once more clearest in its difference.

The coming to consciousness in the case of creative effort presupposes a long unnoticed process of shaping: it is this process which, entrusted to preconsciousness, is geared to integration and communication. But the process of creation is not completed during its sudden and inspirational phase.

When the first phase gives way to a second, when the artist steps back to view his work, one might say he identifies with his public; he views what "the spirit" has done. He views it, temporarily, from the outside.

The reaction of the public repeats in reversed order and in infinite variations some of the processes which the artist experienced. These variations are determined by cultural and social factors as well as by individual predispositions. Though these reactions may vary in depth, the core of the process, a gradual moving from the fringe to the center, seems to occur with great frequency. It is impeded when we read the narration as if it were a daydream to be borrowed, or when the art work becomes the pin-up girl, i.e., when we miss the distance from immediate gratification; then we are taken back to more primitive modes of reactions. Clinical observations of such incomplete reactions to the creative effort constitute a promising field of investigation in their own right. It is not of these failures that I intend to speak, but of the successful reaction: then the process from the fringe to the center means that gradually a change in the attitude of the audience is taking place.

This change may have various dimensions. It may lead from the borrowed fantasy stage to the appreciation of the complexity of thematic composition, from *what* is being said to how it is being said, and here again from the pleasure in rhythm to a gradual understanding of first one, then many interacting and integrated meanings. These changes have one factor in common. They are all changes involving the movement of the audience from passivity to activity. In the end the audience may experience some of the excitement and some of the release of tension which arises when the barriers separating unconscious from preconscious or conscious processes have been loosened: "Next to the seizures and shapings of creative thought—the thing itself—no comparable experience is more thrilling than being witched, illumined and transfigured by the magic of another's art." (H. A. Murray)

In speaking here of re-creation we stress that the shift in psychic levels which operated in the creative process is repeated, and that in this sense the public identifies itself with the artist. The process of identification to which we refer does not concern the artist as an empirical individual.

How could we assume that biographical familiarity should be essential when the greatest artist's personal life is shed in anonymity? And yet, no other compares to Shakespeare as master of creative communication. The identification with the artist's biographical person may be the conscious business of the critic, and re-creation at this point may become reconstruction, the reaction of the connoisseur. What we, here,

mean by identification with the artist is an unconscious process in which the audience becomes in its own right creative by being re-creative. It follows the spell of the emotive potential. The understanding then leads to the unconscious mechanisms which the artist had used, to the impulses he had mastered; the audience is with him both in reaching downward and in mastery. We do not assume that the audience's experience need be or can be identical with that of the poet. "A poem" says Mr. Eliot, "may appear to mean very different things to different readers and all these may be different from what the author thought." The readers' reaction may be richer in implication than the creator ever supposed. There is that old word, the core of all psychology of the great, which says: "The genius builds better than he knows."

At this point the psychoanalytic approach may turn out to be useful to the critic in a new sense. It is conceivable that some of the attributes which lend artistic value could be measured by the study of response, and, more particularly, by the survival of great art works as effective stimuli. The study of their emotive or esthetic potential may account for the lasting appreciation of such unique formulations as that of Sophocles in his Oedipus Trilogy, or for many comparable achievements in the arts which seem to triumph over changes in social affairs. Many generations of men repeat what seems to be the fundamental reaction to creative imagination in art: they accept the invitation to an experience of the mind in which a specific and particularly intensive kind of intrapsychic communication is temporarily established, in which controlled regression becomes pleasurable since the experience stands under the firm and unabated control of the Ego, which has reasserted its functions: it has become creative, or re-creative.

This outline of some of the problems which occur in creative communication cannot be terminated without, however, a brief mention of two of the sources of insight which have proved particularly valuable. One large field of study which has attracted the attention of many investigators concerns the specific function of creative processes in the therapeutic situation: the creative communication is then limited to the creator and the therapist. Story, poem, or picture facilitate the "coming to consciousness"; the creative experience becomes part of the therapeutic procedure. Whatever the limitations of this technique, even its disadvantages, it has proved, with certain individuals, to be of considerable value. If we try to generalize the conditions under which this is the

case, we may say that when free association itself is too threatening, when it might lead to a regressive rush which can no longer be controlled, channelized into production and shaped by the Ego, the onslaught of the repressed can still be organized.

This experience has sharpened our eyes to similar processes outside of treatment situations, in which psychological balance is being reestablished by creative activity. When in the course of a particularly intensive conflict, narcissistic regression threatens the creative act, an attempt to communicate with others and to establish contact may act as a catalyst. The very intensity of conflict may lend particular impact to the work thus created. This is true of some of the productions of later psychotics produced during the pre-psychotic phase of their illness. A normal counterpart to the extraordinary richness and sometimes deceptive fascination of their productions may be found in the expressive ventures of some adolescents who solve the age-specific intensification of their conflicts by sudden and frequently transitory spurts of creative activity.

The second area of clinical experience in which the study of creative communication has become particularly fruitful concerns the artistic productions of the insane; here the variety of meanings which the process of creation gains for the individual becomes apparent; words are not signs but acts, pictures tend to become verdicts, and creation may mean "making" in a literal and magical sense. In extreme cases the artist identifies himself with God, the creator; he destroys and restores, rules and organizes in creating. The delusion of the psychotic artist has its counterpart in the unconscious fantasy of many creative individuals and determines some of the complex attitudes of the artist toward his work; foremost among these, the striving for perfection and the feeling of responsibility in exercising his power as creator. What appears as diffusion of instinctual drives, as magic destruction and reparation in the work of the psychotic, plays its part in many creative processes, but the regression to magical procedure is only partial and temporary. This difference becomes clearest when we realize that the product of the psychotic is created as an act to influence the course of events, while the work of the non-psychotic plays upon an audience from which it aims to elicit responses.

The value of the study of psychotic art for a deepening of our understanding of creative processes in general should not lead us to

underestimate differences, a tendency particularly significant in the contemporary scene. The interest of certain artists and of sections of the public in productions of the psychotic has suggested to some a comparison between modern and "psychotic" art, a comparison which points to similarities as evidence of disintegration in our civilization, or of "cultural psychosis." I feel unable to share in, or even to discuss in detail, speculations leading in this direction and find it more useful to refer to what has been briefly suggested before. The fact that productions by psychotic creators have gained esthetic significance for part of the contemporary public is, I believe, due to the fact that their extreme and often badly integrated ambiguity is experienced as a challenge. "Psychotic art" serves as a screen for a generation to which the exercise of projective power has become to some extent pleasurable in itself. We have spoken of the influence of psychoanalysis on the artists. We have now to add that such influence naturally includes the reaction of the public. The preference for forms which stimulate projection, which enhance the creative activity of the public is not unique in history. Although it seems that it has never been as consistently pursued as during the last decades, it has occurred with varying intensity during various historical periods. Psychoanalysis can only point to the existence of a psychic mechanism, which manifests itself as a partial shift of roles in creative communication. The importance of this shift during various historical periods may be established in studies by experts in cultural change to whom psychoanalysis may have here suggested a new perspective.

The three problem areas which have been reviewed represent only a selection of what psychoanalysis has contributed to the study of creative imagination. Let me now for a moment speak not of what was achieved but of that which we would most like to know; not of results but of questions. All that concerns the typical predispositions of the masters of creative imagination, if such a "typical predisposition" exists, all that concerns the ontogenetic approach to the creator, remains in darkness.

Who are those best equipped for creative work, those whose creative imagination functions with greatest ease and most appropriately? Needless to say that no answer can be offered; we have not been able to solve a problem which during the ages has puzzled all and has evaded even speculative approaches; and we remember Freud s modesty when

dealing with it.

When as psychoanalysts we study the artist's personality we are subject to the limitations imposed by the therapeutic situation. Hence most of the statements of psychoanalysts seem to focus on relevant but not on specific factors. There is the impression that in the early history of creative individuals traumatization may play an unusually great part; there is some evidence that there are definite peculiarities in the function of certain defense mechanisms—a problem to which Freud referred when he spoke of "the flexibility of repression" in the artist, which he shares with many severely impaired individuals. With some of them the creative individual is said to share the proclivity to a passive attitude manifest in the high incidence of homosexuality. But again it is the difference which seems most suggestive; the passive abandonment is the matrix of the artist's inspirational experience. Let us at this point turn to speculation: the biological nature of man, one might say, accounts for the fact, that on the verge of his greatest and supremely active effort, in creation, his experience tends to be mixed with passive elements; he receives from outside, what he is to elicit, he incorporates before he produces and experiences even his own thought as reaching him as benevolently tendered from an outside agent.

The quest for the specific confronts us with insight into the limitations of our knowledge. All that we can attempt is to point to certain trends in current research which seem to lead in a definite direction.

When we speak of talent and gift we assume the interaction of inborn endowment and environmental influences. For some decades the first area had been neglected; during the last few years it has resumed some of its importance and gradually more and more investigators in various fields turn in this direction. The psychoanalyst expects most of the attempts to study the endowment of the human infant in his earliest stages, to watch how it is molded by the mother and how the mother responds to what appears to be the specific individuality of the newborn. Only in long and painful study may such observations lead into the area where the development of properties in any sense akin to gift and talent may become observable.

Observation here as elsewhere may well follow the path outlined by the clinical impressions gained in psychoanalysis. Let me illustrate this by some examples: The influence of early traumatic experiences on creative activity, their reflection in the artist's work has been men-

tioned. In approaching the study of the child's first forming activities in the development of his fantasy life the reaction to and impact of threatening experiences becomes equally apparent. Imagination tries to cope with threats; fantasy arises in part as a defense against danger. Clinical observation in psychoanalysis has pointed to the role which the interplay of libidinous and destructive impulses plays in the artist's work. Observation of children in their creative activities confirms these impressions. Two-to-four-year olds studied in their behavior at the easel, playing with paint, building blocks, give us a picture of the dynamics of the creative process, more dramatic and richer in detail than expected. There is the child who tentatively approaches the easel, who gingerly puts down line after line, color neatly next to color; then colors are mixed, movements become more rapid, excitement grows, immediate discharge rules. The child has followed the seduction which brush and colors have exercised. Over the months that temptation is gradually mastered. With order, even meaning may accrue to the painting; the impulses to smear may return at times of pressure, and yet the distinction emerges between a completed work, and one which is not completed—whatever completion may mean to the child. The child learns to resist the temptation to destroy what he has just produced, and the functions of expression and communication come to the fore. Such observations are far from the realm of art; they describe what, with a term which has grown somewhat loose, we mean by sublimation. But observations of this kind are part of the empirical study of the development of creative behavior as part and parcel of the development of personality. (I may use this opportunity to report that a psychoanalytically based study of creative imagination is being supported by a grant of the Arthur Davison Ficke Foundation to the Medical School and the Child Study Center of Yale University.)

In one fundamental respect these directions of research and the first tentative impressions seem to prove that recent progress in psychoanalytic theory may help to clarify even complex problems. At the outset I stated that the influence of psychoanalysis upon science and social organization as well as its unique place in medicine was initiated by the scientific study of conflict. But human faculties emerge from conflict. The peeping Tom becomes painter or scientist; children who wildly and excitedly brush colors on paper may develop highly differentiated skills; their painting activity may successfully emerge from

conflict and may develop into a special aptitude. Such detachment of activity from conflict, its fundamental autonomy, is facilitated by certain types of endowment, facilitated further by an infinite range of possible life experience and their interaction.

If we look from the battle for creation in the child, back to the clinical data which psychoanalytic investigation reveals, i.e., to the battle of creation observable in some analytic patients, a certain affinity becomes apparent. *It seems that in every process of creation the gradual emergence from conflict plays its part.* It may start out in serving a fantasy of the individual, in meeting an individual's needs, but to the extent that it emerges from conflict, certain properties may be acquired which are akin to, and some of them identical with gift or skill. We mentioned that themes may be generalized, the emotive potential may grow and the process of creative communication may be initiated. All that is not only the result of conflict; it is at least in part due to the integrative, and in this instance autonomous, powers of the Ego. And thus creative imagination may lead to concrete achievements; some of them art, others devoted mainly and solely to problem solving, to inventiveness in science, or simply to the enrichment of the individual's existence. At this point the problem leads back to the broad stream of our work; for next to therapy stands not only, as was said, the problem of prevention but also that of turning from the infinite variety of the mentally ill to the equally infinite and less explored variety of the healthy. The study of conflict embraces both the well and the sick, it is part of human life, and no basic science of psychopathology can avoid being at the same time basic in the psychology of normal behavior.

In what preceded I have reviewed the thoughts and contributions of many analysts. I have not mentioned names, since this is the occasion when we all join in grateful remembrance. If I have given you the impression that our curiosity is far greater than our knowledge, that we are moving under the guide of clinical experiences to tentative generalizations, I will have been able to convey to you the spirit under which psychoanalysis has developed in the work of Freud.